



NEWS RELEASE

August 14, 2015

Contact: Allison Scott Majure, Environment
505.231.8800 | allison.majure@state.nm.us
Kenny Vigil, Health
505.470.2290 | KennyC.Vigil@state.nm.us

Ban on Domestic Well Water Use in the Animas Floodplain Lifted by New Mexico Environment Department and Health Department

Santa Fe – Today, the precaution against using domestic well water from wells in the Animas floodplain (near the Animas River—site of the Gold King Mine Spill) is lifted by the New Mexico Environment Department and the Health Department with concurrence from the Environmental Protection Agency. All other precautions related to the Gold King Mine Spill of August 5 remain in place.

“The only reason we’re in this position today, to lift the precaution against using Animas floodplain domestic well water,” said Environment Secretary Ryan Flynn, “is because of the rapid response of Environment, Health, New Mexico’s Office of the State Engineer, as well as New Mexico’s Departments of Agriculture, Game and Fish, and Homeland Security, and the work of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

“Alarming levels of lead, cobalt, cadmium, arsenic, iron, manganese, and other heavy metals were evident in the initial pulse of contamination at Cement Creek and the Upper Animas River. With Governor Martinez’ leadership and Executive Order declaring emergency, the state team immediately mobilized to create and communicate safety precautions for New Mexicans barring river and well water use, while we simultaneously worked to collect surface and well water samples in San Juan County.

“Due to New Mexico’s rapid response, and collaboration with the EPA we are today able to lift the prohibition against using well water from Animas floodplain wells. The well sample collection and analysis and general understanding of the hydrogeology of the area provide us with the scientific justification we need today, to lift the ban against using domestic well water from the Animas floodplain.”

All other safety precautions remain in place as follows:

- Do Not Draw Canal or River Water
- Do Conserve Water
- As Needed, Do Get Potable Water from Water Stations
- Do Not Water Livestock with River Water
- Do Not Ingest Fish from the Rivers

(Full text of revised precautions are posted at www.NMDSafeRiverWater.org and attached here.)

The geochemical and water-level data collected by NMED provide no evidence that private water wells are at risk of contamination from the mine waste in the river. The state’s Environment and Health Departments along with the U.S. EPA continue to assess the full impact that the Gold King Mine Spill will have on New Mexico. The results of surface water testing and well water sampling in the Animas River floodplain in San Juan County continue to guide safe practices.

#